

Association of Clinical Scientists

Frequently Asked Questions – FAQs

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This list cannot cover everything but hopefully will resolve some of the more frequent issues candidates may come across in considering their application to the ACS.

For any other problems relating to the **procedure** please contact the **ACS office**.

For any technical queries relating to your **modality or sub-modality** you are advised to contact your supervisor, head of department or your **professional body** that are much better placed to help you on those matters.

For questions related to subsequent **registration** please contact the **HPC**.

All contact details are given in the ACS document pack.

Do I need to register?

Q: What is a registered Clinical Scientist?

A Clinical Scientist is an appropriately trained and qualified scientist working in health care who:

- gives scientific and clinical advice which has a direct bearing on the management of patients
- applies scientific methods to maintain the efficacy, quality and safety of investigative or therapeutic techniques
- introduces and advances new scientific and clinical procedures for patient benefit
- is registered with the Health Professions Council (HPC)

“Clinical Scientist” is a title protected under law. Anyone who is not registered and using it fraudulently will be prosecuted. The use of the term "Trainee Clinical Scientist" or "Pre-registrant Clinical Scientist" is allowed since there is obviously no intention to defraud patients or the profession.

Q: What is registration?

Registration is designed to assure patients and the public, as well as employers and potential employers, which practitioners are appropriately qualified and competent to practise. It sets a standard that is recognised throughout the United Kingdom and provides significant public protection from unprofessional or unethical behaviour. Registration is NOT required for those working in academia or industry or anywhere in a solely research role. For UK candidates the application for registration is a two-stage process, with the award of the ACS Certificate of Attainment required before application to HPC for registration. Those fully qualified and already practising in the profession overseas may apply directly to HPC under their International application route. Registrants must re-register every two years – October 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 etc. for Clinical Scientists.

Q: Who controls registration ?

Registration in many healthcare professions is now controlled by the Health Professions Council (HPC). Most healthcare professions, e.g. chiropody, physiotherapy etc., can register once completing an approved degree course e.g. BSc in “Appropriate Subject” at “Sometown University”. However, Clinical Scientists require a Certificate of Attainment from the ACS proving satisfactory postgraduate training and experience - unless they can qualify for the international application route directly to the HPC. This international route has nothing to do with the ACS, so please direct all enquiries to the HPC – see elsewhere.

Q: What is the Health Professions Council (HPC)?

The Health Professions Council (HPC) was established on 1st April 2002 under powers in Section 60 of the Health Act, 1999. It replaced the Council and Boards of the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine (CPSM) that had been responsible for registration since 1960. HPC finally achieved Privy Council Approval on July 8th 2003 and most regulations relate to this date. HPC also has additional powers for assessing continuing competence after registration (CPD), as well as disciplinary powers over the protected common titles including “Clinical Scientist”, “Biomedical Scientist” and other healthcare professionals’ titles. For more information see the HPC website – www.hpc-uk.org

Q: What is the Health Professions Council (HPC) responsible for?

The HPC receives your application for registration and processes it. You deal with them every 2 years to renew your application or respond to problems. They also provide registration for many other Health Service disciplines such as Physiotherapy, Chiropody, Radiography, etc. Any misdemeanours against you can be reported to the HPC and, by law, they must investigate and apply sanctions leading up to being struck off the register if necessary. Once registered you must renew in 2-year cycles – for Clinical Scientists this

anniversary is in October 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 etc. It is entirely YOUR responsibility to ensure renewals are made at the appropriate times. You can assist this by ensuring HPC are notified of any change of contact address but even if the post fails to deliver reminders to you from the HPC, or documentation from you to the HPC, legally it is your responsibility. You can check what status the HPC have on record for you from their website. If you are de-registered you would not have any insurance cover for any litigation, it could revoke your Department's CPA certification and you should revert to trainee's salary. HPC have a mechanism for re-entry should this happen.

Q: How do I know if I am on the HPC register?

You should have a certificate and be regularly paying for your registration with the HPC. Apart from asking them directly to confirm your registered status, the register (name, number and profession) is in the public domain and can be interrogated by surname or registration number on the Internet at www.hpc-uk.org/register

The ONLY information available publicly is your name and initials (or forename), your registered location and registration number, as well as the part of the register applicable to you – i.e. Clinical Scientist. The registered location may be your work town or city or your home area, depending on your preference in your application form. Clinical Scientists often move around the country during their career development and it is YOUR responsibility as part of your registration to ensure HPC have your current contact address for communications, notification of payments and other requirements. Failure to do so, non-payment or failure to submit required CPD declarations, can lead to being removed from the register – which could have implications on your salary, your job and validity of any insurance cover in case of litigation.

Q: I thought I was on the CPSM and HPC register but cannot find my number or name on the website register?

All registered staff should periodically check that they are on the register. This need often arises at CPA inspections when it can be too late. The scientific professions have identified that a number of staff that were accepted for the voluntary Registration Council for Scientists in Healthcare (RCSHC) register or the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine (CPSM) register have failed to respond to communications from HPC and been deleted. In this case you are not currently registered. You should URGENTLY apply to the HPC directly for re-admission, dealing directly with HPC as this is nothing to do with ACS activities.

Q: What is the Association of Clinical Scientists (ACS)?

The Association of Clinical Scientists (ACS) is an umbrella organisation comprising representatives of each of the professional bodies covering the various clinical science modalities. Nominated representatives of those professional bodies form the Directors of the ACS. Certain other bodies have an observer status with the ACS. It is the responsibility of the ACS to lay down the criteria for competence of applicants and to present a Certificate of Attainment to candidates following a successful assessment. This certificate will allow direct registration with the HPC.

Q: What is the Association of Clinical Scientists (ACS) responsible for?

The ACS is responsible for assessing whether you have reached the level of competence required for the modality in which you practise. It issues a Certificate of Attainment that you then present to HPC, as part of your application for entry to the register, as evidence that you are competent. ACS:

- is NOT a membership organisation so you cannot “join” it - its members are the professions, not individuals
- does NOT evaluate training courses or University degrees

- does NOT have a list of approved University courses for Clinical Scientists – there is no such list and you simply need a 1st or 2nd class honours degree in an appropriate subject – or a higher qualification
- does NOT deal with either preliminary training in these professions or with questions of career progression – see Recruitment Office
- does NOT provide a trade union function - see Federation of Clinical Scientists, Amicus, Unison or other organisations

Q: I completed my qualifications and training and experience overseas. Do I still need to submit to the ACS?

No. If you have completed all the criteria for registration and have been employed as a Clinical Scientist overseas, you can register directly with the HPC under their international route. There are no overseas qualifications “automatically” recognised by HPC and applications are dealt with on an individual basis. However, proficient training in most countries will be acceptable as long as appropriate evidence is provided. You will also need to provide evidence of the equivalence of your overseas degree and you should contact NARIC prior to applying to HPC – see NARIC <http://www.naric.org.uk/home.htm>

Q: Do I have to join the ACS?

No. The ACS is not a membership organisation and individuals cannot join it. It is a review body setting standards and assessing attainment by individual applicants. The constituent professional bodies comprise its members and are:

ACB	Association for Clinical Biochemistry
ACC	Association of Clinical Cytogeneticists
ACE	Association of Clinical Embryologists
ACM	Association of Clinical Microbiologists
ARTP/BTS	Association of Respiratory Technology and Physiology / British Thoracic Society
BAA	British Academy of Audiology
BBTS	British Blood Transfusion Society
BSCN	British Society for Clinical Neurophysiology
BSH	British Society of Haematology
BSHI	British Society for Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics
BSHT	British Society for Haemostasis and Thrombosis
CMGS	Clinical Molecular Genetics Society
IPEM	Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine

NB - Immunologists - The Association of Clinical Scientists in Immunology (ACSI) amalgamated with the Association for Clinical Biochemistry (ACB) in 2007. The British Society for Immunology (BSI) is not a member body of the ACS and therefore members of BSI do not qualify for discounted fees. Ex-ACSI members can gain fast track membership of the ACB and would then qualify for subsidised ACS fees.

Q: Do I have to join one of the member professional bodies?

Membership of one of the constituent member organisations is not a pre-requisite for registration. The professional bodies consider that applications from their members involve a reduced workload for the ACS and so application fees for a Certificate of Attainment are subsidised by the Professional Body’s fees if you are a member of one of these constituent professional bodies. If you require help with your application, it is more likely that these organisations will be better placed to provide that help for you than the ACS who can only assist with procedural queries.

Q: My job title indicates Clinical Scientist already – isn’t that enough?

No. It is illegal, under the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act, for someone to work in the Health Service and use the titles:

- "state registered *clinical scientist*"
- "registered *clinical scientist* "
- "*Clinical Research Scientist* or
- "state *clinical scientist* "

unless they are registered with the HPC. Under separate legislation, closure of employment will be notified by the National Health Service Executive. Once closure of employment has been made, to work in the National Health Service as a Clinical Scientist, either directly or as a contractor, one will need to be registered. Removal from the register would mean that an individual would no longer be able to work as a Clinical Scientist in the public sector. Registration, and the use of the protected titles, does not apply to those working in academia, industry or who have a purely research role.

It is illegal for those who are not registered to imply they are registered and this is punishable by a fine of up to £5000. There is no problem in its use where there is clearly no intention to deceive e.g. “Trainee Clinical Scientist” or “Pre-registrant Clinical Scientist”

Q: Can I be removed from the register?

The HPC is required by the legislation to have two committees, an Investigating Committee and a Disciplinary Committee. The Disciplinary Committee has to decide in cases of malpractice whether to find the registrant either guilty or not guilty of infamous conduct, or it may defer a decision. A registrant found guilty may have his or her name removed from the register. The Committee may, alternatively, issue a warning. It may also remove his or her name from the register, but indicate that it would consider re-admission to the register after a set period, provided proof of good conduct were received. For more information see the HPC website – www.hpc-uk.org

Q: Is it true that I will not be able to work as a Clinical Scientist unless I am registered with the HPC?

Whilst it is currently not a requirement to be registered in order to obtain work, many NHS Trusts will be following NHS guidance and best practice and only advertising for and employing Clinical Scientists i.e. those who are indeed registered. At present this is an issue for each individual NHS Trust. However, it is likely to become a requirement in order to practise as a Clinical Scientist in the Health Service except in a supervised (training) role. Since lack of registration limits your work abilities to your employer (as supervision is always required), it could act as a disincentive to employ you unless you can prove that you will be working towards registration in a short time. This should not stop you applying for such jobs as long as you are close to, or working towards, registration and explain this to the employer. Most medical insurers will only make payment for treatment carried out by registered practitioners.

Q: I am only employed for research work. Do I really need to be registered?

Probably not. The test is whether the work you do could potentially harm a patient. If you are, for example, working in a university and the results are being used for demographic or statistical purposes i.e. your work does not involve patient safety, either directly or indirectly, then registration would not be necessary. However, whoever your employer might be, if you are acting on patient samples and your work otherwise affects patients then you must either be registered or be supervised by someone who is registered. You need to review your job description and actual role to be able to decide. People employed at trainee grade do not need to, and cannot, be registered.

Q: I am a Biomedical Scientist. Do I need to be registered?

In the UK there are two types of scientific healthcare workers – Clinical Scientists and Biomedical Scientists (BMS – Medical Laboratory Technicians). There are many similarities in the two professions including registration with the HPC. Both titles are protected under law and both need further postgraduate training before being fully competent to become registered. However, each has its own entry requirements and training – one is NOT a natural progression to the other though some Biomedical Scientists can and do train to become Clinical Scientists, either by entering pre-registrant (formerly Grade A) training or by obtaining a supervised Clinical Scientist position and

using their BMS experience during training to apply to ACS for certification under their Route TWO (6-year route). Using this route, a minimum of 3 years must be spent working as a Clinical Scientist although *relevant* time as a BMS (or MSc, PhD or MTO etc.) could be used to account for the rest of this 6 year period.

Procedure for Registration

Q: How do I achieve the ACS Certificate of Attainment?

You will need to comply with the timing requirements following training under an appropriate supervisor and then submit a portfolio of evidence outlining your training and experience to substantiate that you meet all the competences laid down in ACS Document Appendix 1. Once your portfolio is accepted you will face an interview with your peers in the profession to discuss your application and satisfy them that you are fit to be registered by receiving the Certificate of Attainment.

Q: When should I contact the ACS for the application forms?

You should obtain the ACS documentation as early as possible to allow you to be preparing your portfolio throughout your period of training. Do not wait until your training period has completed to start compiling your portfolio. These documents can be downloaded from this website. You do **not** need to contact either the HPC or the ACS prior to your submission unless you have problems or queries. There is no pre-registration notification necessary to either organisation.

Q: What will I receive in my application pack?

Your application pack from the ACS, which you may download from this website will contain six documents:

DOC-ACS001 Guidelines for application

This provides directions and assistance in completing your application.

DOC-ACS002 Appendix 1 to Guidelines-Generic Competences

This must be returned bound into your portfolio once completed.

DOC-ACS003 Appendix 2 to Guidelines-Sub-modalities

This provides a table of the acceptable modalities and sub-modalities together with contact details for the professional bodies should you require additional technical advice or assistance. You must apply within one or other of these modalities or sub-modalities.

DOC-ACS004 Appendix 3 to Guidelines-Notes

DOC-ACS004a Appendix 4 to Guidelines-Interview Offers Procedure

Both of these provide directions and assistance in completing your application.

DOC-ACS005 Application form for Certificate of Attainment

This must be completed and returned separately with your portfolio, fees and if necessary, copy of marriage certificate.

Applicants in the following modalities **MUST** state a sub-modality on the application form to allow correct selection of assessors –

Clinical Genetics applicants – Cytogenetics or Molecular Genetics,

Clinical Physiology applicants - Respiratory Physiology or Neurophysiology

Medical Physics & Clin Engineering applicants - Radiotherapy, Nuclear Medicine, Diagnostic Radiology & Radiation Protection, Non-ionising Radiation Techniques, Clinical Engineering or Physiological Measurement & Computing

The following modalities have sub-modalities more appropriate to some applicants but not for others who would not need to specialise. Again it is important to indicate a sub-modality if necessary to allow appropriate assessor selection-

Clinical Biochemistry - Paediatric Metabolic Biochemistry or Clinical Toxicology

Haematology – Blood Transfusion.

You will also require competency documents specific for your modality. These documents provide discipline-specific versions of the general competences Appendix 1 and contains

guidance as to how to complete the Appendix 1 document for your portfolio. These are only guides as to possible successful submissions and should NOT be used as a template for your portfolio. Even if your modality is not represented these will provide useful indications of what you need to provide.

All the documents are reviewed and revised periodically. Please ensure you have a current up to date version – latest versions will always be on the website. All these documents can also be viewed and downloaded from this website.

Finally, you may view anonymised copies of some successful portfolios to indicate the types of layout used. These are only guides as to possible successful submissions and should NOT be used as a template for your portfolio. Even if your modality is not represented, these sample portfolios will provide useful suggestions of what you need to provide and how to lay out your portfolio.

All the documents are reviewed and revised periodically. Please ensure you have a current up-to-date version. The latest version of these controlled documents will always be on the website.

Q: When can I submit my application to the ACS?

You can submit your application to the ACS for the Certificate of Attainment as soon as you have completed your period of training and subsequent experience – but not until the day that that is completed since you and your supervisor are signing that you have fully completed your required period of training.. Be clear that this date relates to the submission of your portfolio, not the eventual interview date. If you apply too early, your portfolios will be returned and a £25 administration charge will be removed from your returned fee.

At least 12 weeks before the start of the preferred assessment month, the completed application form and assessment fee, together with 2 bound and one unbound copies of the portfolio of evidence, should be submitted to the ACS Administrative Office. These interview session times will be advertised on this website for the following 12 months.

Q: How long will ACS processing take?

Approximately 3-4 months from submission. There are set interview dates for each modality as well as deadlines for submission prior to those interviews. This schedule is shown on the ACS website – see Applications-Deadlines.

The sequence of events is as follows.

- a. You CANNOT submit an application to the ACS Office before the day you complete your required time of training and experience – your supervisor is signing to confirm you comply with the full term – not part or it. Your application will be returned, less a £25 administration charge, if submitted early.
- b. At least 12 weeks before the start of the preferred assessment month, the completed application form and assessment fee, together with 2 bound and one unbound copies of the portfolio of evidence, should be submitted to the ACS Administrative Office. You will receive a written acknowledgment of safe receipt immediately. You must have your own extra copy of the portfolio for reference as ACS copies cannot be returned to the applicants once accepted for review.
- c. During the next 4-6 weeks two assessors will review the portfolio for suitability to proceed to interview. Approximately 80% of portfolios are fine and are accepted for interview directly after submission. Please ensure you submit in good time, however, as the assessors may request additional evidence or information if they consider your portfolio exhibits any weaknesses or is not clear. You must allow enough time to ensure you can return this to their satisfaction in order to qualify for the next interview round, or else you will face a delay in your assessment. Around 10-15% of applications exhibit weaknesses or problems which make it difficult for the assessors to know whether the competence of the applicant will be sufficient.

In these cases they request further information to be provided by the applicant *before* they can be accepted for interview. This extra information may take the form of additional pieces of evidence of certain features or perhaps a clarification of timing or data relating to some work cited in the portfolio. This must be produced quickly and must satisfy the assessors before you can be included in any interview session. Make sure you are available during this period to allow a response.

- d. The two ACS assessors will normally reach a decision on the application within 6 weeks of receipt. The candidate will be notified in writing of the outcome by the Office.
- e. If the standard is achieved the candidate will progress to the formal assessment process and will be notified of the assessment date, time and centre. The ACS aims to provide the candidate with 1 month's notice of the assessment date. It is important that you do not plan holidays or other absences in the few months after submission in case either extra data is requested or a date for interview becomes available. Since a series of interviews is planned for the same day, assessment planning does not only depend upon you. If you cannot make an offered interview date you must be prepared to face delays and await a future interview round. Declining a series of offered interview dates may lead to requirements for updated evidence if the delay is prolonged (See DOC-ACS004a-Appendix 4). However, please always keep the Office aware of any plans or problems to avoid disappointment over timing difficulties.
- f. The interview can last up to 60 or 120 minutes, depending on the application route and how straightforward the training and experience has been. The location may be at the ACS Offices in London or, occasionally, in other centres around the country. Overseas applicants who elect to use the ACS or are unable to apply directly to the HPC must be prepared to travel to interview in London. Your fees do not cover transport costs to the interview which you must arrange yourself or through your employer. You will not be informed of your assessors' names until arriving at the interview.
- g. At the interview you will be expected to discuss with the assessors the evidence you have presented and perhaps respond to specific scenarios to establish your competence. The actual acceptance for an interview should be taken as a positive sign that, as far as can be judged, if you carried out the work evidenced in your portfolio, you should have the required competences for certification and registration. However, that is what the interview will establish. Only some 4% of applications have failed at interview stage – due to applicants not being able to discuss their work and convince the assessors that they understood and carried it out and are truly competent.
- h. The assessors will not indicate your success or otherwise after the interview. They can only recommend a course which has to be ratified by the ACS Board.
- i. The ACS Office will communicate the outcome of the assessment process to the applicant formally as quickly as possible and usually within a 2-week period of the interview. Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with reasons for this, together with some indication of what is needed to rectify it for a future re-submission.
- j. With the Certificate of Attainment you can now apply for registration with the HPC. This will normally take 2-3 weeks but could be longer during HPC's busy season – June, July and August following College graduation when many people in other registered professions will be applying to them. The Certificate of Attainment is a UK qualification and this route to HPC is always considered a UK application and not an international route, even if the applicant was trained abroad and is applying from overseas.

Q: How long will HPC processing take?

HPC will process your application as quickly as possible.

You must return their application form and a questionnaire with their assessment fee and the supporting documentation required. Upon receipt of these, with an ACS Certificate of Attainment, your application will be checked by their office to verify that it can legally be considered under their UK or International routes as appropriate. After verification, straightforward applications using the ACS Certificate of Attainment should lead to direct registration within a few weeks. Those applying directly to HPC under international routes may be asked to clarify aspects of the application and be interviewed by a panel formed of two assessors or Partners. This approach normally takes 4-6 weeks.

For more information see the HPC website – www.hpc-uk.org

Q: What if there is a problem with my ACS application?

At the initial submission - The ACS Administrative Office will check your application on receipt for completeness of contents (Application form, Generic Competences document, 2 copies of correctly bound portfolio, one copy of unbound portfolio, cheque for correct fee and marriage certificate if appropriate). They will also check for key compliances (degree status and period of time covered for the appropriate route and HPC registration of the nominated Supervisor of the work). They will notify you if anything is missing or incorrect. The application will be held until these points are addressed satisfactorily. Ensure you are available following submission in case of such enquiry. If these cannot be resolved quickly, the application will be returned together with the fee, less a £25 administration charge. The full fee must be included again at re-submission. Your portfolios will not be returned once accepted at this stage.

At the initial portfolio assessment - Two Assessors from the modality or sub-modality review the application and, if the criteria are not met, this will be communicated in writing to the candidate together with the reasons for non-compliance.

1. *Unacceptable portfolio* - Candidates who submit a sub-standard portfolio of evidence will be provided with guidance on remedial action required for resubmission at the next scheduled round of assessments. You may or may not be able to reapply. The fee is returned less a £25 administration fee. The full fee applicable at the time must be included at any re-submission.
2. *Insufficient portfolio* - In many cases the additional information required could be provided by the candidate within a short period – say a month. In these cases the portfolio is held until the requested information is submitted when, if accepted by the assessors, the application proceeds to interview with no penalty.

At the assessment interview - Unsuccessful candidates who fail at this stage will be advised of recommended remedial action to assist a future application. You may or may not be able to reapply. There is no refund and a full fee applicable at the time must be included with any re-submission.

Should the candidate fail in only one competence area, then one further option allows the assessors to require remedial work only in that section followed by a resubmission within a set short period of a simple report of the work instead of a full portfolio. The subsequent, more limited interview will solely address that competence and none of the others. The interview will last no longer than 30 minutes in this case and the re-submission fee is £50.

Q: What is the success rate of applications and why do people fail?

Data so far suggests that around 4% of applications are rejected at the initial; portfolio stage and require improvement before acceptance. The most frequent causes for rejection at portfolio stage are insufficient amounts of evidence, either omitting key competences or providing only an isolated piece of evidence instead of a few examples. But also note that the assessors are NOT looking for quantity at the expense of quality of evidence –

excessively bulky portfolios waste assessors' time and suggest an applicant has poor management skills.

Another 4% fail at interview, having an apparently satisfactory portfolio by failing to satisfy assessors of their true competence. The most frequent failure at interview is insufficient clinical experience or exaggerated claims in the portfolio of experience that was only witnessed and not carried out personally and therefore understood and still used in practice. Again of these failures at interview, two thirds are from Route TWO applicants with only one third from Route ONE applicants, supporting the observation that it is sufficient clinical experience that Route TWO applicants may lack. Conversely, the portfolio rejections come almost equally from both Routes, indicating a more general lack of care in portfolio preparation from some applicants.

Q: Can I appeal if my application is refused?

Candidates can appeal in writing. Appeals should be sent to the ACS Administrative Office within 4 weeks of receiving notification of the outcome. The letter should indicate the grounds of the appeal. Appeals can only be made on the process of the assessment not on the judgement of the assessors. The Office will ONLY deal with communication from the applicant – not with supervisors or other third parties.

Criteria for obtaining the ACS Certificate of Attainment

Q: What are the criteria I need to meet for the ACS Certificate of Attainment?

- Firstly, there are NO approved degree courses or approved universities for Clinical Sciences, unlike other healthcare professions registered under HPC. You must simply have a 1st or 2nd Class Honours degree in an appropriate subject relating to the modality or sub-modality. Sub-modalities are specialisations occurring in some professions. Applicants need to be assessed in the skills of that sub-modality although they will be registered under the umbrella modality and, indeed, classified simply as a Clinical Scientist. Obviously someone trained in one specific sub-modality may not be qualified to work in a different sub-modality of that profession. However, changing roles does not require re-registration with HPC - see elsewhere.
- Your supervisor for the work MUST be registered as either a Clinical Scientist or a medical professional and they must countersign and vouch for your work and full time of your training period. You may have more than one supervisor. Supervisors who do not meet these criteria may be acceptable but the applicant must provide a full CV of their proposed supervisor giving academic and professional qualifications as well as job history and brief professional experience. This will be reviewed by the ACS Board and, on the advice and recommendation of the Director in whose modality the application falls, decide if the supervisor is applicable to act for the applicant in an ACS application. This must be provided to the ACS Office **in advance** of the submission of the portfolio application to ensure they meet the necessary standards to act in that role. The decision of the Board is final.
- You must comply with either Route ONE or Route TWO requirements - see below.
- You must submit the completed application form, portfolio and appropriate fee.

Q: What is a modality?

The HPC will register you as a Clinical Scientist. However, because this encompasses a range of distinct professions, they will also note your modality or speciality on the register – though this is not publicly available. The modality is simply a self-declaration of the limitations of your fitness to work. It should be clearly understood that registration conveys a “fitness to work” – a standard of quality and safety. It does in no way indicate a

“fitness for the job”, which rests entirely with the employing health authority. The HPC do not require you to re-register if your work and/or your role change. You remain registered as a Clinical Scientist but are expected to maintain the necessary CPD and training in working practices to fulfil the criteria for “fitness to work”. Sub-modalities are not recorded by the HPC and are simply divisions of modalities that allow better assessment of candidates upon application.

Q: Which modalities are accepted by the ACS?

The ACS has recognised twelve different modalities of practice for registration.

The registered modalities are:

- Audiology
- Cellular science
- Clinical Biochemistry
- Clinical Genetics
- Clinical Embryology
- Clinical Immunology
- Clinical Microbiology
- Clinical Physiology
- Haematology
- Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics
- Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering
- Developing Sciences

The ACS Board has also accepted some sub-modalities for a number of the modalities. The sub-modalities are not published on the HPC register and are for the purpose of guidance to the Board secretariat.

- The modality of Clinical Biochemistry has two sub-modalities – Toxicology and Paediatric Metabolic Biochemistry.
- Clinical Genetics has two sub-modalities of Molecular Genetics and Cytogenetics.
- Clinical Physiology has two sub-modalities - Respiratory Physiology and Neurophysiology.
- Cellular Science has two sub-modalities – Cellular Ultrastructure & Molecular Pathology and Myology & Immunohistochemistry.
- Haematology has a sub-modality of Blood Transfusion.
- Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering has five sub-modalities – Radiotherapy, Nuclear Medicine, Diagnostic Radiology & Radiation Protection, Non-ionising Radiation Techniques and Clinical Engineering, Physiological Measurement & Computing. It is possible to be assessed in more than one sub-modality of this group if requested. However, you are warned that this will entail questioning on all competences for each sub-modality and please note the comments on what HPC records on the register elsewhere.
- You cannot apply to ACS or HPC under any other modality or sub-modality. However, it is recognised that some Developing Sciences encompass sections of more than one modality. Again this has been catered for in the final modality and you will have assessors chosen from the different modalities that comprise your work. Because of this, the cost is greater since more than 2 assessors may be required for this less common occurrence and we cannot combine interviews with other candidates.

Q: I am trained and work as Biomedical Engineer. Do I have to specify this sub-modality or can I register under the global Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering modality?

You register with HPC under your selected Modality. You register as a Clinical Scientist though your modality is recorded on the HPC database. They do not record your sub-

modality. However, to be assessed by the ACS and the HPC you must select one of the sub-modalities if one exists. Only in this way can you be assessed in your specific work. Otherwise you could apply for jobs in any form of Medical Physics, e.g. Radiation Physics, without adequate training and experience. The ACS will record your details under your sub-modality if one exists. Once registered with the HPC you do not need to re-register if you subsequently change modalities or sub-modalities as your career progresses – you are expected to ensure you meet the requirements of the new role - see elsewhere.

Q: What if my job does not fit into any of these modalities?

Because registration is only possible within these modalities and sub-modalities you cannot currently register with the HPC if you do not fit into one of these categories. Therefore, there is no mechanism for you to apply to the ACS for a Certificate of Attainment at present. If you cannot decide which modality or sub-modality you come under, you should discuss this with your Head of Department or Professional Body. The ACS Office cannot help in these cases.

Q: Will I be able to register in the future?

The ACS Board must approve modalities and sub-modalities. The current list of accepted modalities and sub-modalities may change with time.

Q: Which degree courses are acceptable for my modality?

Unlike other healthcare professions registered under the HPC, there are NO approved degree courses or approved universities for Clinical Scientists. No fixed rules exist, other than it must be a 1st or 2nd class honours degree, since the variety of courses available in Clinical Science is varied and a list could exclude one by oversight. What is required is a degree in which a substantial element of the degree course contains a grounding of basic science appropriate to the clinical science modality to be registered.

For example:

- *Audiology*: any science degree.
- *Cellular Science*: life science degree
- *Clinical Biochemistry*: biochemistry or life science degree with a major biochemistry component
- *Clinical Embryology*: life science degree
- *Clinical Genetics*: life science degree with a genetics component
- *Clinical Microbiology*: life science degree with a microbiology component
- *Clinical Immunology*: life science degree with an immunology component
- *Clinical Physiology*: life science or medical science degree with a human physiology component
- *Haematology*: life science degree
- *Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics*: life science degree with some genetics, haematology, molecular biology, immunology components
- *Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering*: a physics or engineering degree

Overseas applicants must obtain equivalence of degree through NARIC – see elsewhere.

Q: What if my degree was obtained in a non-UK university?

This is not a problem. The HPC and the ACS would use The National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARIC) for testing equivalences of overseas qualifications. You should apply to NARIC for a document verifying that your qualifications are equivalent those from the UK and include this with your ACS/HPC application. For more details please see the NARIC website - <http://www.naric.org.uk/home.htm>

Q: What if my working experience was obtained outside the UK?

For applicants who have received their experience and training outside the UK, the ACS will consider applications on an individual case basis. Advice on acceptability should be sought from the relevant professional body (see Appendix 2) and the HPC.

Procedure for obtaining the ACS Certificate of Attainment

Q: What are the routes to obtaining the ACS Certificate of Attainment?

The two training routes for applicants for the ACS Certificate of Attainment, and subsequently for registration purposes, are detailed in Section 3 of the Guidelines for Application.

Route ONE is a 4-year route which applies to the majority of conventional trainees who go through the approved 2- or 3-year formal pre-registration (formerly known as Grade A) training courses followed by a year or two experience in the laboratory whilst still under supervision.

Route TWO is a 6-year route which applies to ALL those not meeting Route ONE criteria. For this you follow the same procedure as for Route ONE but you obviously have to gather more paperwork since the training and experience cannot be summed up in completing the official training course. This is the only route available for the Clinical Physiology and Developing Sciences modalities and the Paediatric Metabolic Biochemistry sub-modality that do not have accredited training schemes to allow entry by Route ONE.

Q: What if my modality doesn't have a training course?

There are currently 10 approved training schemes for the modalities of: Audiology, Clinical Biochemistry, Clinical Embryology, Clinical Genetics, Clinical Haematology, Clinical Immunology, Clinical Microbiology, Histocompatibility & Immunogenetics and Medical Physics & Clinical Engineering. Currently there is no approved training scheme available in Clinical Physiology or Cellular Science and, therefore, anyone applying for the ACS Certificate of Attainment and subsequent registration in these modalities will need to apply under Route TWO. This would also apply to applicants under the Developing Science modality and the Paediatric Metabolic Biochemistry sub-modality.

Q: I had a break in my work experience. Does it have to be continuous?

The total of six years postgraduate training does not have to be continuous for Route TWO applicants. Similarly, break for health or other legitimate reasons is acceptable within the 4 years. However, prolonged absence could affect the training and it is the candidate's decision whether and when they meet the competences in these cases.

Q: I have a PhD and have done 3 years formal pre-registrant (Grade A) training. Can I apply under Route TWO now rather than waiting another year to apply under Route ONE?

Yes – and the PhD could be obtained before or after the formal training period. However, it cannot be a recommended option. Your attention is drawn to the statistics – of those 4% of applicants that fail at interview stage, having apparently on paper provided adequate evidence of their competence in their portfolio, two thirds will be Route TWO applications and only one third following Route ONE. Together with other evidence this suggests that an application directly after three years of formal training often entails inadequate clinical experience to establish proper competences and a much greater risk of failure at interview.

Q: Do I have to achieve every one of the competences?

The generic competences in Appendix 1 cover your experience dealing with aspects of Scientific, Clinical, Technical, R&D, Communications, Problem Solving and Management. You are expected to achieve an overall competence in all of these sections but will obviously be stronger or weaker in specific aspects – you will not be expected to be an expert in all of them. Any weaknesses may be pointed out at interview but may not be sufficient to warrant withholding the Certificate of Attainment. Appendix 1 is NOT a tick-off list requiring 100% compliance.

Q: Do I have to include my training log and PhD thesis in my portfolio?

No. For those candidates applying under Route ONE, the portfolio of evidence should cover the 4-year training and experience period. For those candidates applying under Route TWO, the portfolio of evidence should cover the 6-year training and experience period. Compiling the portfolio is one aspect of establishing your competence in Communications and Problem Solving. The portfolio must convey to the assessors in a clear and concise manner that you have achieved the necessary training and experience to work unsupervised. Guidance to the preparation is given in the Appendices. Assessors will not look favourably on either disorganised portfolios or masses of either irrelevant or repetitive data. Abstracts of theses or papers should be sufficient if they clearly prove the relevant competence. Failure to comply with this and inclusion of full documents will result in rejection of the application.

Read and follow the Guideline Notes in the application pack carefully.

Q: Should I include my original certificates – BSc, PhD, marriage etc?

No. Submitted material will NOT be returned – so only provide copies of any important documentation.

Q: Some of the evidence in my portfolio refers to me under my maiden name before marriage – will this be a problem?

If there are any references in the portfolio to you under a different name you must include a copy of proof of your name change with the application form – not bound into the portfolio. This may be a copy of a marriage certificate or deed poll etc. as applicable.

Q: Will I be asked technical questions at the interview?

It is not intended to predominate on technical aspects which would have been better covered previously, for instance at pre-registration (Grade A) training reviews. The ACS Certificate of Attainment includes the requirement for formal interview by two ACS-appointed assessors from the relevant modality (or sub-modality) who will normally be from ACS member professional bodies. They are your peers so will be aware of what other applicants have gone through regarding training courses and typical further experience during career progression.

The formal interview will be structured to include an assessment of:

- a. the candidate's knowledge of *each* of the Generic Competences as applied to the relevant modality or sub-modality
- b. the portfolio of evidence submitted in support of gaining the Generic Modality or sub-modality Specific Competences

It will seek to establish that your training has been comprehensive. You will not be re-assessed on the academic components of training except in so far as it may support the background to competences. You will be required to demonstrate a good general level of scientific ability and an understanding of the basic principles related to the competences, especially the health and safety issues and including a full appreciation of practical aspects (i.e. not just *what* was done, but *why* it was carried out that way and the significance of the results obtained).

Q: What if the assessors disagree?

This is likely to have arisen at the initial assessment stage prior to interview. In this case a third assessor will be brought in to arbitrate.

Costs

Q: What is the cost of obtaining the ACS Certificate of Attainment?

The following rates apply.

Members of ACS Member Professional Bodies:	4-year route	- £125.00
	6-year route	- £175.00

	Developing Sciences	- £225.00
Non-members of ACS Member Professional Bodies:	4-year route	- £250.00
	6-year route	- £250.00
	Developing Sciences	- £300.00

You MUST quote a current membership number to qualify for the discounted rates.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure portfolio submissions arrive in good time and NO variation on these timings can be accepted due to postal delays – proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery.

Q: What happens to the fees if I am not successful?

Monies are not refundable from either the ACS or the HPC. If you have to re-apply you may have to submit a second fee depending on the severity of the problem. This would be explained in the comments following the interview.

If the submission on arrival at the ACS Office is incorrectly bound, incomplete or missing some key component that cannot be resolved quickly, the application will be returned together with the fee less a £25 administration charge. The full fee must be included if re-submitting.

Candidates who submit a sub-standard portfolio of evidence, as identified at the initial review by assessors, will have the application and fees returned less a £25 administration charge. The full fee applicable at the time must be included at any re-submission.

In many cases a more minor requirement for additional information identified by the assessors' initial review can be provided by the candidate within a short period – say a month. In these cases the portfolio is held until the information is submitted when, if accepted by the assessors, the application proceeds to interview with no penalty. If the candidate cannot produce the acceptable required evidence within this time frame then the application and fees are returned less a £25 administration charge. The full fee applicable at the time must be included at any re-submission.

Unsuccessful candidates at interview stage may or may not be able to reapply. There is no refund and a full fee applicable at the time must be included with any re-submission.

Q: Why do we have to pay a fee to get the Certificate?

The fees go towards the costs of the assessments and administrative costs of providing the certification. It is a one-off payment related to your registration. The Professional Bodies are partly sponsoring the cost for members of their associations.

Q: What is the cost of registration with HPC?

There is an initial HPC review fee of £50. The registration fee of £170 will place you on the Clinical Scientists register at the HPC for up to two years. You will be issued with your registration certificate. You will be required to re-register every two years with HPC (October of odd years for Clinical Scientists – 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013 etc) and pay the renewal fee applicable at that time (currently £70). There is a 50% reduction in fees for the initial registration so that you will have to pay £50 + 50% of £140 = £120 for 2 years, or £50 + 50% of £70 = £85 for 2 years. The HPC will also require you to provide evidence of continued professional education (CPE) and development (CPD) to demonstrate ongoing learning within your profession. Detailed guidance on this will be issued by HPC.

Miscellaneous Areas

Q: Where do I find out about the pre-registrant (Grade A) training courses?

These courses are advertised annually with applications in January and February each year for commencement the following Autumn. The courses are only in approved hospitals that are regularly accredited to ensure the level and spread of training is adequate. For information on these courses either contact the appropriate professional organisation or, for training places in England and Wales, contact the Central Recruitment Office for Clinical Scientists at Northgate ResourceLink, Boundary Way, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7HU Telephone 0871 433 3070 or email clinicalscientists@northgate-is.com for details. More information and application details can be found on their website - <http://www.nhsclinicalscientists.info>. For Scotland and Northern Ireland, you should enquire of the local or national branches of the professional bodies concerned.

Q: Do I need to maintain my registration and CPD if I take a career break?

Yes. If you intend to return to work in the near future you must retain your registration status and ensure the HPC are aware of any changes of address. You should also ensure you maintain CPD during the break. For a more prolonged absence, the HPC have agreed with the professions on minimum re-training requirements for such people who do not retain their registration status and this depends on the length of the break. Re-training requirements for staff after work breaks can easily be resolved and continuance with CPD would obviously entail reduced need for this. For more information see the HPC website – www.hpc-uk.org

Q: I had a break in my work experience. Does my experience have to be continuous to count towards registration?

The total of six years postgraduate training does not have to be continuous for Route TWO applicants. Similarly, break for health or other legitimate reasons is acceptable within the 4 years. However, prolonged absence could affect the training and it is the candidate's decision whether and when they meet the competences in these cases.

Q: I have been working part-time. How do I calculate my work experience for my ACS application?

Part-time work is considered on a pro rata basis for your ACS submission – so 2½ years working 2 days a week is equivalent to one year full-time etc. You need to contact your professional body if you are not sure of what constitutes a “normal” working week.

Q: Where will the interview assessments be held?

Venues are sometimes arranged regionally to minimise travel difficulties but are generally at the ACS Offices in London.